

# SOCIAL ACTION

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## *Important Notice*

*From January 1955*

## **SOCIAL ACTION**

*will have a larger number of pages,  
several new features and a new editor.*

**The subscription rate for 1955  
will be raised to Rs. 6 per year.**

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## **HERE AND THERE**

### *Second Class Consolation*

Social workers gingered enough to launch social enquiries are apt to feel discouraged at the poor response they get. They may find some comfort (that second class comfort we have in learning others do worse than ourselves) when going over the report of the Press Commission. Their enquiry was official, voted by Parliament and financed by Government; it had framed a scientific questionnaire, sent timely reminders and even added threats of legal action.

The questionnaire was sent to people keen and expert on the subject, to among others, 670 members of Parliament, 1,015 MLAs and MLCs, 285 Ministers, 29 Vice-chancellors of Universities, 172 political parties, and 7,335 editors. Answers came from 3 MPs, 4 MLAs and MLCs, none from Ministers, none from Vice-chancellors, 5 from political parties, and 111 from editors : an impressively low total which makes a percentage of 1.3. Yet with that scanty material the Press Commission succeeded in issuing a report of some 550 closely printed pages, and it promised a second part with historical notes and voluminous appendices.

Social enquiries rarely show such a literary fertility, but they meet with better response. The secret is not far to seek ; the press is called an industry, social work is a labour of love. People are most industrious in love.

### *Tricolour Aloft*

Repeatedly touring visitors and armchair economists tell us of the wonderful progress made in Red China. Apparently they never saw or heard what has been done in India since Independence. One might even say that few of our urban citizens are aware of the changes that took place in our villages over large tracts of the country. Undeniably much has been done in the countryside. Community projects and National Extension Services have acted as catalytic agents and accelerated the progress. Take the voluntary and unpaid labour spent on wells, roads, drains and the like ; it has meant doubling the investment in agriculture. The National Survey put agricultural investment at Rs. 166 crores in 1950-51 and at Rs. 350 crores in 1953-54,

this was exclusive of the large multipurpose works undertaken right and left and due to yield returns only after 1956.

What is still more significant is the revolution in the peasant's mentality. Conservatism is shed ; the peasant has developed a keen feeling for self-help. The proofs are in the increased demand for fertilisers, and the ever-growing practice of intensive cultivation (Japanese style).

What of glorious Red China ? Chinese papers (like *Ta Kung Pao* of Tientsin) complain that "certain commodities are in short supply", even before subtracting the food stuffs exported to Russia against heavy machinery. Chinese production of food is much lower than in India, and instead of nearing self-sufficiency China finds herself in greater scarcity than ever. India has raised both her agricultural investment and her food-production, China has reduced both. Whilst the Chinese oligarchy imposes increasing burdens on the peasant, India's government lightens his burden and registers economic progress. Some patches of the Indian countryside show little advance (*v.g.* Chota Nagpur is still in a sulky mood), but by and large the peasantry is on the upgrade. Our urban intelligentsia are not uniformly aware of it and go on belittling their people. Yet the progress is there for students to see and for publicists to advertise.

#### *Buffet Socialism*

Besides and above economic considerations, there are larger issues, and the British Labour Party's tour was an occasion to underline them briefly and gently. Mr. Attlee and his pals went to Moscow : it was a merry

party with little protocol but plenty of caviare, vodka and toasts. They went to Peking ; it was a merrier party with the cuisine and the protocol emperors and mandarins had brought to perfection. Neither party implied socialism in the world or even socialism in one country : it was socialism at one table.

In Peking the mood was frankly convivial. The British Labourites were at ease and Mr. Attlee quite spontaneously and neatly told some differences between Old England and New China. "In our younger civilisation with its different traditions, we of the Labour Party brought in extensive changes in order to meet the aspirations of the masses. We were able fortunately to do this by peaceful and constitutional means. We had however to deal not only with internal problems, but with external, in particular with the historical position of Britain as a world power".

### *India Ahead*

The occasion called for another remark. For a populous under-developed nation which comes of age and grows aware of its tremendous resources, it is a great temptation to make a hurried bid for world power by dictatorial methods. India resisted the temptation and maintained the Gandhian priority of moral means over immediate advantages. That is why her economic progress is rapid, her world stature growing even faster, and her future more hopeful. But of course, from Peking it is hard to look over the Himalayas.

A. L.

# THE QUIBBLES OF THE LAW

*Who is a workman?*

In a recent award of the Industrial Tribunal, sitting at Ernakulam, to adjudicate a dispute between the Burma Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Co. of India and their workmen in Travancore-Cochin State, the first point of the decision was to determine the exact status of the depot superintendents. Were they workmen as defined by the Industrial Disputes Act? According to the definition of the Act, a workman is "any person employed (including an apprentice) in any industry to do any skilled or unskilled manual or clerical work for hire or reward." Basing himself on this definition, the presiding judge observed that "the definition does not mention anything about designation or pay of the employee. The only tests to see whether an employee of an industry is a workman or an officer are according to this definition, his employment for hire or reward and the nature of his work. If a person is employed to do a skilled or unskilled manual work or to do a clerical job for hire or reward he will be a workman; if not, he will be an officer or a member of the supervisory staff and would be excluded from the operation of the Act. Thus it is the nature of the work and not designation or pay that determines the status of an employee of an industry. This is the principle adopted by Industrial Tribunals and the Labour Appellate Tribunal of India when considering the question whether an industrial employee is a workman or not".\*

\* Labour Law Journal, July 1954, pp. 99 sq.

The judge then went on to appeal to precedent. He quoted the ruling of Justice Bini Basni Prasad, the Chairman of the Bank Conciliation Board, who in 1949 declared in his conciliation award that "as a general principle....the nature of the work done by an employee and degree of his responsibility determine whether he is a clerk or an officer. His designation does not matter. But the salary of an employee is not the determining factor because the definition of workmen in the Industrial Disputes Act contains no limitation based on salary, as is the case of the definition of Workmen's Compensation Act".

The difference between the definitions of the same term 'workman' of the Industrial Disputes Act and the Workmen's Compensation Act is an important point that should be remembered. The Workmen's Compensation Act covers all manual labourers, whatever their occupation, subject to certain maximum earnings. In India, this upper limit has been fixed at Rs. 400, and therefore covers manual labourers drawing Rs. 400 and less. Moreover the Indian Act specifically excludes persons employed in the capacity of manual labourers in the Armed Forces from being covered by the Act.

The learned judge then went on to point out that on previous occasions whenever a question arose as to whether a particular person was an officer or a workman, the difficulty was solved by on-the-spot evidence. Thus in a similar situation in 1951, the Labour Appellate Tribunal of India had held that where the main duties of an employee were of a supervisory nature, he would not be a workman within the meaning of the Industrial Disputes Act even though he might

have some manual or clerical work to do occasionally but incidental to his main duties. For the same reasons, a foreman cannot be regarded as a workman.

The final test of the problem whether a person was a workman or an officer was to see whether the person in question was in a position to command, to issue orders and to exercise management functions to the extent that he was empowered.

Dealing with the case under adjudication, the judge declared that the depot superintendents could not be considered as workmen within the meaning of the Act, since the evidence clearly showed that they were responsible for the company's stock at the depots ; that they had power to fix work for the employees under their charge ; that they could grant them leave, suspend them, or recommend them for punishment, etc. They had some clerical work to do in the nature of certain forms to be filled in, but this hardly occupied them for more than half-an-hour a day ; the rest of the time was taken up with administration and executive functions. The award was therefore against regarding such persons as workmen.

Strange to report, but almost at the same time, a precisely contrary judgement was given in respect to the same persons doing the same type of work in the High Court of Judicature at Madras.\* Only this time the petitioners were the Messrs. Burma-Shell Oil Storage and Distributing Company of India, Ltd., Madras who appealed to the High Court against the decision of the Labour Appellate Tribunal, Madras which had

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\* Labour Law Journal, Aug. 1954, pg. 153.

certified that the Depot Superintendents were workmen within the meaning of the Industrial Disputes Act. The Judge sided with the Tribunal and maintained that in his opinion as the Depot Superintendents were responsible for stock receipts, storage and issue of stocks, they are merely store-keepers and as such, their duties were not of a directional, managerial or supervisory nature. Rather their duties were substantially clerical. They had no power to punish clerks, though they could recommend the issue of a charge-sheet. Nor did they have any initiative but had to work under the instructions from the branch offices, and had no power beyond these instructions. In the mind of the judge, a managerial or supervisory function involved some degree of initiative and independent work. Hence he decided that the Depot Superintendents were not officers, but workmen within the meaning of the Act.

#### *Quantum of Bonus*

What share percentage of the total surplus profits earned by the industry should be apportioned among the workmen of the same has always been a problematical question for the adjudicator. And though the difficulty has often come up before the courts, no consistent policy has been adhered to, but each case has been decided on its own merits.

The case we are here considering is an interesting one. Kenyon Greaves, Ltd. was incorporated in 1950 as a private limited company with a paid-up capital of Rs. 2 lakhs, about three-fourths of the shares being held by the Greaves Cotton and Co., Ltd. It began manufacturing ropes for the use of the textile mills

since December, 1950. Although in the first year the firm suffered a loss of Rs. 41,000, in 1953 there was a profit of Rs. 1,50,000. How had Kenyon Greaves treated their workmen ? A clerk was being paid Rs. 75, plus a dearness allowance of Rs. 60—14 as. Out of eight machine operators, two were paid Rs. 100, three Rs. 80, and three Rs. 50 as basic salary. The mazdoors were paid a salary of Rs. 30, and all began to be paid a dearness allowance of Rs. 50—9—0. From January, 1952 the company started paying provident fund contributions. The dearness allowance was increased and in 1953 almost all were given promotions in salary. In 1952 the workers were paid a bonus of one-sixth of their annual basic earnings.

The workmen however were dissatisfied with the bonus they had received in 1952 and demanded that the percentage should be raised to two-thirds of the year's basic earnings, since the company had made huge profits and since their salary was inadequate. They desired to see the balance sheets of the company to get an idea of its financial position and also the trading ledger.

The judge upheld the action of the company in refusing to show the ledger as, he maintained, the workmen were not entitled to look into the detailed affairs of the business. Moreover the company was still in its infancy, and though it seemed to have a virtual monopoly in the production of ropes for textile mills in Bombay, much older companies making larger profits had not been asked to pay a higher percentage of their profits in bonus to the workmen. Finally he explicitly denied that the payment of bonus

was a profit sharing scheme and that there was no ceiling to the quantum of bonus.

Let us take the last denial first. Obviously bonuses are paid out of surplus profits. And though they are calculated not as a percentage of profits but in relation to basic earnings, still the fact that they are paid out of surplus profits, in the long run transforms them into a kind of share in profits. Have workmen a right to such a share? The Courts have discussed this point and come to the conclusion that where the actual wages of the men fall below the living wage, bonuses may be regarded as a kind of deferred wage to make up the loss suffered by the wage-earners. But where the firm pays its men a living wage, it is generally allowed that they can still claim a part of the profits because they have co-operated with management to secure them. It is true that no such stipulation of a bonus-payment enters the wage-contract when it is first agreed to by the workman and his employer, but the payment of bonus has become so customary in certain industries that workmen would resent its cancellation unless the firm were making losses.

Strictly speaking, a workman has a right to a living wage, which has been defined by the Committee on Fair Wages in the following manner: "The living wage should enable the male earner to provide for himself and his family not merely the bare essentials of food, clothing and shelter, but a measure of frugal comfort including education for the children, protection against ill-health, requirements of essential social needs, and a measure of insurance against the more important misfortunes, including old age." While this

is a very comprehensive definition and quite acceptable to our way of thinking, the real difficulty arises when the living wage has to be calculated in monetary terms. Generally the Courts proceed by a rough and ready measure of what they think should be the living wage in a locality and then decide on the quantum of the bonus. But when wages are sufficiently high what right have workmen to a share of the profits ?

The question is further complicated by the fact that as Fraser says, "the theory of profit is by common consent the most recalcitrant element in the whole structure of value and distribution analysis".\* The right of the entrepreneur to what is known as profits in the strict sense, *viz.* the difference between the sale of the product and the total cost of production, is generally admitted as a reward for his organising, directing and risk-bearing activities. And though the place of the individual entrepreneur in our days has been taken by the management, yet the ownership of the means of production vests in the shareholder who also controls the executive, and bears the loss. So the shareholder has the right to the profits. The worker can claim part of them only from a distributive angle in so much as the state may decree and permit that when the surplus is very large, a wider distribution would be more to the national good. A very large surplus is often due to monopoly and in this case distribution of part of it among labour is more obviously justifiable.

Whether workmen are entitled to look into the detailed affairs of the business depends on the attitude

\* Fraser, Economic Thought, pg. 213.

of management and of society at large. Managements who favour intimate co-operative endeavour with their workmen might easily agree to have representatives of labour on the managerial board to discuss questions of policy, price fixing, quantity of goods to be produced, etc. In India where labour is still largely illiterate and shifting, it would be inadvisable to favour such projects in many industries. But the ideal of tempering the wage-contract with a more co-operative attitude to the workmen on the part of the management by acquainting the former with the position of the firm and seeking their opinion in regard to policy and prices should be sufficiently emphasised by the tribunals.

### *Retrenchment*

The Government Porcelain Factory, Bangalore, had retrenched 61 of its workers ; 30 of them on the ground that as the revenue had fallen and stocks had accumulated they were found to be superfluous, while the remaining 31 from the electro-porcelain section were dismissed for the losses incurred in that section and for reasons of rationalization. The Union took the case before the Industrial Tribunal.

The Court held that retrenchment is a necessary incident of any industry and that so long as it is not undertaken on false pretences or *mala fide* in the sense of unfairly increasing the labour load, or victimising certain individual workmen or discriminating against them, it was justifiable and the Industrial Tribunal could not interfere. The management of the industry has the right to determine the strength of its labour force, and if any retrenchment has to be made, this

should be done *bona fide*. In other words, any signs of victimisation or discrimination, or unfair labour practice or an increase of the workload would be evidence of a lack of *bona fide*, and in this case the management would have to justify its action. Otherwise if the retrenchment had to be made for good reasons management was the sole judge of its extent and should not be asked to justify its action in this matter.

While upholding management's right to effect the retrenchment in the case under consideration, the Tribunal decreed that the retrenched workmen could not however be thrown into the street especially when through no fault of their own they had been retrenched. The judges declared that the workmen were entitled to what is termed "retrenchment relief", i.e. compensation for loss of employment for no fault of theirs even when retrenchment is justifiable. In assessing the amount, the Tribunal took into consideration the length of service of the retrenched workmen, the causes of their retrenchment and the ability of the employer to pay. Thus workmen with service of more than three months but less than six months were entitled to fifteen days' total emoluments. Workmen with service of more than six months but less than one year were to get one month's total emoluments. Workmen with service of between one and two years were to get two months', between two and three years, two and a half months', and more than three years, three months' total emoluments. By total emoluments was understood both basic pay and dearness allowance.

It is quite clear that the judges were aware of the loss and harm caused to the retrenched employees by

a policy of retrenchment. But the 'retrenchment relief' decreed by them was surely meagre. With the present state of unemployment in the country, few of the retrenched men would be able to get a new job within even three months. And the older they are, the harder will it be for them to find and adjust themselves to a new type of work. Some enquiry into the efficiency of management, especially when the concern is a government one, could be usefully undertaken before retrenchment is finally permitted. There is a hue and cry all over the country today over the threatened rationalisation in the textile factories especially ; both government and trade union leaders abhor the vacuum of unemployment. The industrialists have been asked to shelve their rationalisation projects. The first priority must always be to ensure a livelihood for as many workmen as possible.

In the face of such a mass of public opinion against retrenchment, it is not likely that the judges will so easily condone any scheme of retrenchment in the near future. Even a *bona fide* attempt will not be so easily permitted. The employer may be forced to suffer a temporary loss till alternative employment can be found or provided for his unemployed men. But at the back of all this apparently awkward and dilatory policy one can sense the desire for a fairer deal to the manual and clerical worker. There is a growing awareness of the greater worth of the individual, a respect for his dignity, a determination to provide for his essential needs ; all this marks a great step forward in the building up of a social order in which men will be able to live a more satisfying life, more in accordance with their rational nature and their divine destiny.

A. Fonseca

## WE'RE HIT WHERE IT HURTS

The Socialist Trade Union at Ahmedabad brought a charge against the Textile Labour Association (which isn't dominated by the Reds) stating that its "leaders are too active and the members too passive". This is according to a report in the July number of the *Social Action*.

Irrespective of whether this charge by the Socialists against the TLA is just or not, this piece of criticism, it strikes me, can be tagged on most appropriately to a large number of our Trade Unions.

Often, some of us at the top of these unions believe that if anything has to be done well, we ourselves must do it. Consequently, in all good faith, we try and centralize all the work on ourselves. And if at all we solicit the help of others, don't our furtive glances dart a thousand times towards our helpers to see if what they're doing is the way we want it done? And if they try to be original, woe betides them. Haven't we tried and tried and tried until we found that our present method of procedure to be the most practical one? So, 'keep to the old track, son,' originality doesn't pay!

As time elapses, our relationship with our very co-workers too gets coloured. It dawns on us in slow degrees that our co-workers ought not to know one or two details with regards to the running of the union. We rationalize it by saying that they wouldn't understand. But details have a way of adding up till they gather sufficient momentum to emphasise a point in a

big way. Then under varying circumstances things our co-workers, we feel, ought not to know about begin to multiply visibly. We then become secretive. By distrusting the judgement of others to begin with, we ultimately reach a stage when, unconsciously, we distrust the persons themselves.

Many who've tried to co-operate with us have thus been made to feel that they aren't allowed to exercise their own ideas sufficiently ; they wonder whether their presence in the union isn't merely being tolerated ; some even feel they're bluntly unwanted in their unions.

Soon we discover that a good many of the members absent themselves from meetings. Then quite suddenly they fail to put in their appearance altogether. A little later we make another startling discovery : our very co-workers have followed suit. One by one all have left us. And so we face the task ahead alone, feeling as if we were martyrs without ever realizing that we're our own persecutors. This is the mournful result of trying to do the work in our unions all by ourselves.

This disease of "centralization" is eating into the cadre of our unions. This is a disease that's gnawing at organic points which makes the smooth running of our unions an impossibility.

This will never do. Something has got to be done about it. But just what ?

Being an official of a union is no reason whatsoever for any of us to impose our will on others. And if we're obeyed under such conditions, it won't last. It can't. It will soon wear out. As Mr. Kalapura,

one of the speakers at the recent AICUF Ernakulam Conference, emphasised so much, one has to be fully *convinced* in a cause before he takes to it seriously. Those who look up to us for the lead have a right to know what they're in for before they can be persuaded to follow us. Unless we explain to them what exactly we're going to do and convince them of its fruitfulness, it's hardly just on our part to expect the members of our unions to follow us in an intelligent and enthusiastic way.

As explained at the Central Committee Meeting of the AICUF in 1953, according to the dated concept of leadership, the soldiers in some former wars were kept in the dark regarding the decisions of their superiors. They hardly knew what they were fighting for. Whereas in World War II, the speaker remarked, "the radio was kept busy all hours of the day and night giving the rank and file the latest news and carrying the very voice of Alexander or Mac Arthur or Eisenhower to each fighter's heart". And, the speaker added rather pointedly, "it is only if they are taken into the leader's confidence and shown that their co-operation is appreciated by their leader that men will continue for any length of time to work for his cause".

In this connection, I'm reminded of a sentence from a lecture on the *Vocation to Leadership* at the First National Chaplains' Session of the AICUF. He said : "The leader must associate his men as closely as possible to his work ; nay to the very responsibility of leading. He will thus make them feel that the movement is *their* movement, and that its success depends on *them*."

And until we get accustomed to consider our followers as co-operators, and not as *sub*-operators, such a charge as was brought against allowing insufficient incentive to members of a union, to know better its working, by the over-activity of its officials can easily be flung into our faces. And doesn't it hurt where it hits, or does it? Here are seven tips to fellow-leaders.

#### *Plan your work*

Don't plunge yourself and your followers into action without mature consideration. Plan your work. Try and envisage possible difficulties. (Be prepared to be contradicted).

#### *Consult others*

Before attempting anything, as far as possible, ask the advice of others who're in a position to "know", and don't forget to ask the opinion of your own members.

#### *Discover facts*

Facts are facts. Don't try and dodge them. If convinced by another's argument, admit it. If you're convinced that another plan will work better than your own, adopt it.

#### *Enlist aid*

From committees. (Planning committee,...) If possible get every member into one of the committees. This procedure will get very many people working. (But don't boss over these teams!) Let them feel they have a hand, and a free one, in running the show.

### *Face difficult situations*

Don't leave it to your members to contact people who're unpleasant to deal with (e.g. getting necessary permission from a short-tempered employer). Do it yourself.

*"I shall go with you."*

If a member is about to do a job and if you've a few moments to spare, tell him : "I shall do it *with* you." You'll make him proud of his leader's company. *Give the devil his due!*

Not that your followers are devils, though at times you might be inclined to think so. But when some work is done well, find an opportunity to congratulate those responsible for it in private or/ and in public.

*Vinny*

## SOME ASPECTS OF DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

In the preceding sections of this study, we achieved some understanding, albeit a very limited one, of democracy's essential implications for the larger functional divisions of society. The latter were taken to be those categories of collective human relations which are most frequently and fittingly classified as political, economic, and cultural. So far as man's large-scale, common, temporal endeavours are concerned, these three levels of institutional life would seem to cover them rather completely. In this the final phase of our

investigation, the aim is to see how the actual social situation in India compares with the principles previously laid down. Before starting out on this interesting factual survey, however, there is need of a bit more theoretical preparation. The term temporal that appears in the above explanation injects a new and important issue into our discussion. Its presence makes a further consideration of its significance advisable at this point.

As used here, the qualifying notion of temporal sets limitations of time and space upon the realities under review. It therefore restricts our attention to those joint efforts of men which aim at attaining objectives whose content and value are measured mainly by terrestrial or earthly standards. This existential condition should be sharply distinguished, of course, from that other one wherein man, in his capacity as a creature of spirit together with body, is able to transcend a purely dimensional order and move about in timeless and trackless spheres. That higher realm, we know, is customarily referred to as the spiritual or eternal order. There, man is specifically confronted with goals and goods having an existence as well as a worth that is fully beyond the pale of sensory experience. The corporative designations usually given to the group affairs of men transpiring in these areas are those of moral and religious.

With the principles and practices followed there, democracy has no direct connection. Since that is an order peculiarly God-given and God-guided, it must ever remain preeminently authoritarian in its mode of operation. God's infinitely unique position in such a system demands that He exercise a proportionately

unique power there. No element of equality exists between men and God. Nevertheless, a sound, supernaturally oriented morality and religion will have a vitally important indirect bearing upon, and will supply the only thoroughly stable foundation for, a truly democratic social life. From such a source comes the sole enduring, and a singularly objective, basis upon which to establish the personal dignity of the individual man, and the concomitant sense of duty in each individual person. And without these pillars of human personality no democratic development will long prevail. Hence the relationship between democracy and religion is a most intimate one. But its proper realization requires that religion penetrate and permeate democracy, not that the latter enter so much into the former. One very special and significant way, though, in which a democratic social system does work a marked, yet indirect effect, upon religion lies through the political process known as limited secularism. The modifying notion of "limited" is generally left out of this expression. It is inserted in the present instance to help introduce and emphasize important distinctions which must be made in this regard.

Secularism, the social arrangement whereby the religious affairs of a society are radically separated from its civil proceedings, can be practically implemented in different ways. In as much as these two planes of human existence are in a certain sense separable, with each having its own ends to achieve, and each likewise equipped with means for attaining such objectives, they are respectively entitled to a mutual independence of a sort. Still, by reason of the simple and essential fact that both sets of actions are intend-

ed to benefit the very same subjects i.e., individual persons, they can never be absolutely segregated one from the other. The ultimate unity of their respective ends imposes a demand for close and continuous co-operation between the two diverse procedures. This is what is implied in the concept of limited secularism. But it is all very far removed from the unlimited, exaggerated, and unrealistic kind which strives for a full and final divorce of the dual paths.

When we turn to the present official position of India in this matter, we note that, by the terms of the National Constitution, it is a secularism of the limited variety which has been introduced. Despite the satisfaction that is derived from such a fortunate finding, it is yet possible to have qualms in this respect for the future. After all, the Constitution is amendable, and is in fact already in the throes of such a procedure. Not that there is anything wrong or even dangerous in such a move of itself. But it does indicate the existence of a ready-made facility for effecting fundamental changes in contemporary social life. Should there be a sufficiently strong will in favour of some basic revision, the way to procuring the same is quite evidently within close reach. And certain currents of thought that are blowing somewhat freely, even if not strongly, in India today clearly show the presence of a mentality aiming in that direction. There are overt, though still somewhat scattered, signs of a movement in favour of an absolutely autonomous secularism, in which there will be complete separation between social and religious life. The latter is to be allowed, perhaps even aided, to wither away. And in its place, depending upon particular preferences, stands either

the Individual, the State, or the Class as the arbiter of society's ethical norms. Supporters of India's traditional conservative policy in this regard must maintain a constant and articulate alertness to this crucial challenge, if they are to prevent its eventual and fatal success. So much for our observations on the ideological plane. Let us now turn our attention to the more specifically social side of the Indian factual picture.

Politically, one might justifiably assert that India has stepped off to a fast start in its march toward a democratic social development. The election proceedings held thus far demonstrate a strong sense of civic responsibility on the part of the people, together with at least a satisfactory ability to discern the more important issues at stake, and to select their representatives with a reasonable degree of relevance to the practical solution of these problems. Many improvements yet remain to be effected along these lines, no doubt, chiefly through better educational facilities for the general advancement of the voters' social knowledge and understanding. A gradual lessening of the superficialities in the prevailing political platforms, with the consequent lowering of the superfluity in numbers of participating political parties, appears as another accomplishment that is highly desirable. Such quantitative excesses invariably contribute to the qualitative debasement of any democratic political system.

Anent the status of post-election relations between the chosen officials and their choosing constituents, some further salutary symptoms of democratic virility are in evidence. The quantity and quality of civilian

advisory committees to the Government that are regularly in action bear notable witness in this respect. Periodic party conventions which are well-attended and efficiently conducted provide additional instances of this healthy sign. The fact that these meetings are most frequently organized on a provincial pattern, and occasionally are even more localized, with extensive attention devoted to small-scale as well as large-looming problems, supplies ample opportunity for, and likely assurances of, the proper degree of intimacy that should characterize the positions of rulers and ruled. Worthy and public-spirited citizens too seem, more often than not, to be presenting themselves as candidates for public office, thereby subjecting themselves to the many disconcerting, sometimes even debilitating, duties associated with such endeavours. Nevertheless, at least a few democratically dangerous tendencies can be detected in this area also. There are indications anyway, of a rather tight centralization of administrative authority ; undue impatience with criticisms and opposing views, even when the latter arise within a particular political camp itself ; and worst of all, an unfortunate amount of suspicion amongst the ordinary people that too many of their officials are more self-centered than public-spirited. The latter deficiency, assuming it does exist, is indeed a critical one. There is nothing better calculated to destroy the very heart of a political community than the loss of its peoples' confidence.

In the economic sector, we find what are unquestionably the poorest proofs of Indian democratic development. While employers, on the whole, are probably no more autocratic and absolutist in their poli-

cies and practices than are their business brothers in other parts of the world, a number of national conditions combine to give them an appearance of holding such an undesirable position certainly. One of these seems to be the awareness of a serious need on their part to prove to the new national Government that private enterprise can really do an effective and efficient job for the country, and hence should be allotted its proper place and prerogative in the general economic program of the country. To underscore their productive prowess, producers may at times resort to methods which are not far, if at all, removed from the dictatorial type. Unilateral and often-times unjust action in the matter of making and enforcing the working regulations of a plant (Standing Orders) is an outstanding example of undemocratic offences taking place there. On the other hand, ignorance and a rather hopeless apathy among workers, enhanced by a scarcity of earnest and informed leaders, tend to handicap the satisfactory progress of a widely scattered labour movement. Political patronage and pressure is a twin-headed hinderance that adds considerably to the desultoriness of trade union activities. So long as disabilities of this sort continue to plague the workers' cause, little if any advance can be made in the direction of democratic economic mechanisms. The strongest support of the employees' position, as well as the most direct restraint upon that of the employer, is thus kept woefully inept. When we consider the democratic prospects from the consumer angle, the bleakness of the scene becomes still more profound. Outside of the vaguely elementary efforts at legal controls through governmental agencies, there is precious

little being done to safeguard the economic status of purchasers. This, it is hardly necessary to say, is by no means a uniquely Indian condition. The same defect can be found in just about every country of the world. And yet, the adverse effects of such a situation are probably more hurtful here than elsewhere, in view of the extremely low figures of the consumer's income. What is more, Indian consumers do not even enjoy, in any large measure at least, the advantages of helpful advice regarding their expenditures, much less anything like gainful advances toward voicing their opinions over the prices and the products involved therein, from associations formed in their prime interest.

There are some bright spots in the scene though. The trade union movement is growing internally and gaining ground externally, both occurring with painful slowness. Leaders are being trained and are accumulating experience, and followers seem to be manifesting a surge of hopeful enthusiasm. Employers are learning the value, not to mention the inevitability, of dealing with their employees in a spirit of partnership. First steps toward the vital process of Collective Bargaining have been taken, and there are expectations of things to come in this connection which, while they may not be exactly great, are indeed encouraging. The procedures adopted here stand in need of much clarification and expansion. But this should come with additional time, so long as the participants continue their present efforts. The Government's attitude toward voluntary methods and measures of co-operation is a powerful factor in their favour, and affords added assurance of its eventual success. If the

joint approach to employer-employee relations is conscientiously cultivated, then, when that rather ridiculous, from a really democratic viewpoint, system of economic control known as the Managing-Agency is finally removed from the Indian scene, it may be satisfactorily superseded by a bipartisan coalition of the two main parties-at-interest. This would come very close to a concrete realization of the democratic ideal. Not nearly so much cause for elation can be found in the consumers' camp. True enough, strong attempts at fostering the consumer cooperative movement are being made. But this always has been, and very likely ever will be, a secondary form of organized consumer activity, so far as a full-scale economic democracy is concerned. One can hardly visualize the utility of such a mechanism for mass production purposes. And yet, the consumers must deal with producers who operate in that way. Some manner of more democratic means is therefore required to assist purchasers in arriving at more equitable positions in their contacts with the makers and distributors of a product. Both employer and employee ought to interest themselves in the advancement of this economic project. For they both should gain in a very proximate and practical way from the ensuing results. The subsequent strengthening of consumer attachment to their enterprise that must inevitably follow upon this arrangement is bound to improve the security of their respective investments therein. And the increased confidence, on the part of the Government, in the public value of their productive efforts that simultaneously stems from the social consciousness thus displayed will

surely effect an expansion in the area of economic freedom allowed their organization.

On the cultural plane, democratic progress and prospects in India are especially prominent. Broadly conceived and executed programs for promoting education, recreation, and health, amongst all levels of the people, and in a substantially unregimented and non-opportunistic fashion, constitute a cultural endeavour that makes fair-minded men everywhere openly marvel. For size and significance, few social ventures can compare with this one. But it is when the methods of analysis and attack used in confronting the problems are considered against this intensely complex background that the situation takes on its more unique and morally compelling characteristics. The programs entail some of the best democratic procedures. As an excellent example of this, one can point to the practice of emphasizing self-interest and self-help on the part of those who are intended as the primary beneficiaries of the various undertakings. Targets, cut to fit local dimensions, are analysed in conjunction with local representatives. This greatly enhances an articulate community consciousness. After plans have been formed, and as the overt action commences, a premium is placed upon cooperative contributions by the local populace, with necessary help, of course, forthcoming from outside. This, manifestly, supplies another positive charge of high intensity to the general community spirit. The personal and the social habits of the participants both receive a lasting lift. Another notable democratic derivative of this campaigning on the cultural front involves the uncovering and cultivating of talents and tastes for leadership among the

ordinary citizens. An impressive, if not imposing, number of village volunteers who demonstrate a definite degree of ability and willingness to assume the critical responsibilities of control in low-level supervisory positions are appearing. This is a highly portentous occurrence. For it is only a society which can produce a more or less continuous stream of leader prospects from among its regular members that will survive, let alone prosper, on a democratic basis. Widespread decentralization and dissemination of authority, one of the principal pillars of democracy's edifice, cannot prevail, unless there be widely dispersed opportunities for the exercise of the same. This in turn will partially, but not passingly, depend upon the existence of an available managerial potential capable of using such powers.

A further valuable democratic feature appears in the form of a satisfactory spirit of accommodation displayed by the more highly and somewhat distantly placed officials toward their inferior assistants, who are drawn from, and act for them in, the project or "block" area. This is an element of considerable importance, since such a sympathetic attitude from above stirs-up an air of goodwill within which the fires of interest and enthusiasm burn with a steady intensity amongst all involved.

What is probably one of the most serious weakness that plagues democratic cultural development directly, and which has indirect consequences that carry over into the political sector as well, passes by the name of Communalism. Passionate devotion to traditionally provincial patterns of cultural conduct often threaten to cause dangerously deep divisions

between separate sectional groups. All too frequently, it seems, relatively petty social factors of locale, like language and habit, are permitted to interfere, beyond the proper measure of their real worth, with more weighty nationalistic and humanistic obligations. Traces of an inveterate casteeism also distract and to some extent detract from the prospering of democracy. While the fading remnants of this lost ideal are being subjected to a relentless corrective pressure by political processes, and have thereby been compelled to contract their dwindling forces slowly but surely, there is still need of some supplementary measures, if the blight is to be eradicated entirely. Since the real source of this social illness is centered in the interior recesses of the human personality, it can never be thoroughly expurgated except by means which can somehow reach into that deep-dug sanctum. Law, the major instrument of political persuasion, is inherently unable to meet this requirement. But the penetrating powers of cultural dynamics, strengthened and sharpened by the precepts of revealed religion, are the most reliable of all possible equipment for such purposes. As we saw in an earlier section of our study, these are the facilities for touching the hearts and souls of men.

To conclude this consideration of the principles of a sound social democracy, it is well to stress two additional points which, for want of time and space, have not been elaborated upon in what has been said so far. Such a move seems particularly pertinent, since both these items, in their Indian context, constitute what might truly be termed the weakest and the strongest features of democracy in this country. One

pertains to the social role of the state. The other relates to the position of the family in society.

We noted before, in the article on political democracy, how it is not only necessary that the government of a state should be subordinate to the citizens thereof, from the standpoint of ultimate authority, but also, under the organic social principle of subsidiarity, that this organized political power must acknowledge additional limitations on its sovereignty which stem from sources below it in the social hierarchy. That is to say, the State has to recognize a certain sphere of self-sufficiency in the structure of the lesser social units otherwise within the scope of its general jurisdiction, such as the economic and cultural groups, and the family, and hence refrain from interfering with a legitimate functional autonomy there. In India, for readily understandable reasons, the Government finds it advisable, or even necessary, to utilize its organs and mechanisms of social control in a rather comprehensive way, economically and culturally speaking. This paternal interest, which, when properly held in check, is a rich blessing, can, upon its bursting the bounds of propriety, turn into a hideous curse. Just where the critical dividing line lies is extremely difficult to determine. The fact remains, nevertheless, that the great divide is there, and must be respected, if the ascendancy of political authoritarianism, with its terrors of totalitarianism hovering in the background, is to be avoided.

Nothing at all has been said about the family, except for the brief reference to a statement of Pius XII cited in the opening article of this series. Such neglect

is not meant to imply any insignificance or inappropriateness in that social unit so far as democracy is concerned. Rather should the silence be taken as a testimonial to the unique status of that association. It stands in a category by itself, much the same as that other exceptional social institution known as the religious body or Church. And it is, also like the latter, an extremely vital factor in a democratic society. Since the spirit of a common brotherhood, and fatherhood which constitutes the dominant element in a democratic social order, is first born and best nourished within the confines of a healthy family life, the strength of the latter will largely effect the stability and virility of the former. Furthermore, the family may be considered the source and the stimulator of all the social virtues. It is surely the cornerstone in the whole edifice of society. Looked at from this angle, democracy in India has as great, if not greater, substantive resources as exists anywhere else in the world. For India, above all else, is a nation of families. However, here too, similar to the situations we have already noticed in the remaining social sectors, there are ominous signs of danger present. A number of degenerative processes are creeping in, and this under a mistaken notion of progress. What are perhaps the two most insidious and internecine instances of this drift towards social deterioration work in opposite ways but produce the same final results. One is a method of unnatural control-over births, contraception. The second is a process of unwarranted decontrol-over marriages, divorce. Both threaten the family as an institution with the same dire end-death. Both represent a concession to

immoral tendencies latent in the social body. Those citizens of India who earnestly seek the continued prosperity and progress of their country, not only as a democracy but also as a nation, will do well to remember, to promulgate, and to put into practice the fundamental principles of sound and successful living recommended by the universally esteemed father of their Country when he said, "Civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms....Moral results can only be produced by moral restraints. All other restraints defeat the very purpose for which they were intended..and if artificial methods become the order of the day, nothing but moral degradation can be the result".<sup>1</sup>

J. S. Connor

## SOCIAL SURVEY DEPRESSED CLASSES

Education should change the look of the villages. This is badly needed if we believe the finding of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes. And why not to believe it when it tells us what everybody can easily observe: namely that the rights granted by the Constitution are absolutely ignored, in this case as in some others. Public wells, tanks, public shops, hotels, places of entertainment are still shut to Harijans. The reason is, that Harijans being dependent on people of the Higher Castes for their living, would

<sup>1</sup> M. Ghandi, HINDHU DHARMA, pp. 57, 142-43.

not venture to go against the wishes of the latter. There is also the fact that even among Harijans the caste system flourishes as of old. They are not welcome to claim equality with the high castes when they themselves are so particular about their subdivisions.

The remedy proposed by the Commission, or at least one of the remedies, does not seem adequate. It consists in dropping the word "Harijans, Adi Dravidians", and to tell depressed castes to call themselves Hindus without any addition. It is there that the shoe pinches. A Hindu as such does not exist, one is always a Hindu of this or that caste, Paria or Brahmin. It is so deeply embedded in the system that it would be easier to separate Siamese twins than to separate the two. Hinduism has few tenets compulsory on all, but caste is one of them, since it is the practical expression of karma at each fall, or rebirth, in samsâra. There are good reasons to believe that at the beginning it did not exist in the present form of so strong an exclusiveness in commensality and marriage. The past is a one-way river, as all rivers, and the water does not go up stream to its source.

### CHRISTIAN HARIJANS

Where Dr. Kaka Kelkar, the President of the Commission, exaggerates, it is when he said that Harijan Christians are economically, educationally, politically more backward than their co-caste brethren. Let us say in fairness that economically they are on a footing of equality with the others; their huts are the same sordid hovels. If educationally they are in a worse state than the Hindus Harijans, we hope that

Dr. Kaka Kelkar will be able to point out the cause : the official exclusion of Harijan Christians from the benefit of educational schemes intended for the betterment of the downtrodden people.

If unluckily there is still contamination from Hinduism even in the Christian fold, there is a capital difference. It is against the spirit of Christianity, and there is perfect equality in the sight of the Church ; Adi Dravidians have been raised to the priesthood. The untouchability at the time of services, marriages etc...pointed out as the common shame of Hindus and Christians has not to be shared by the second, at least to the same extent. Even if here and there priests have for peace-sake tolerated, the ancient customs to linger in their parishes. They do it against the main current of Christianity.

The educated scheduled castes, backward classes etc...always turn to the Government for more advantages. In the Technical Colleges of Madras University after the admission of the few students coming from other states 15% of the remaining seats are reserved for the scheduled castes and 25% go to the educationally and socially backward classes, which include many well-to-do people. They easily accept the stigma of backwardness if it enables them to get into a College. The Government has done away with the ancient practice of taking into account the educational status of the parents of the candidates. It may be that circumstances are such as to warrant a more lenient treatment to the backward and scheduled people but when one considers that only 40% are entering on merit one may ask whether it is for the general good.

### A PUZZLE

One variety of puzzle consists in reconciling hard facts. Here is an instance. On the one hand, India pladges her friendship to China : Chou en Lai is received at New Delhi with the welcome, Bhai Bhai, we are brothers (or is it sisters ?). On the other hand, the highest officials of the land denounce all lackeys of foreign powers, even or especially the Red lackeys, a lot that are ready to sell their country to Moscow. Why then welcome Chou en Lai who is a lackey of Moscow, who receives arms and munitions from Moscow, and who, whatever be appearances, does like all leading Communists, receive and obey orders from Moscow ? Why ? Of course the world does not follow logic, least of all in foreign policy.

What is of greater interest to the readers of "Social Action" is the Communist Action in India. It is quite alive, and benefits by the Red victories and by the prestige their delegates and delegations enjoy in our official circles and our publicity services. How many members of the Communist Party are there in India ? According to official statistics there would be some 60,000. And these sixty thousand are not sleeping partners making a sleepy appearance at general meetings. They are trained agents, alert and ready to obey any signal from Moscow. How many are there in the Trade Unions, in the Peace Leagues, etc. ? Apparently even the police is not able to keep count of them, chiefly because the best are not the most obvious and are never arrested or suspected. They all have the "Agitators' Handbook" at their fingers tip ; they are authentic agents of Moscow.

The *Pravda* of the 4th of July carries a significant article : "Russia has only one desire, it is to keep the friendship of India. That is why Russia denounces the enemies of India, and those enemies are the foreign missionaries who swamp the country, who insult Indian customs and culture, who lead an anti-Indian propaganda, who in short are Americans or the lackeys of America. India has better do away with them all". This article is well in the Soviet style ; whatever benefits the Soviet, that and that alone is good, and also in the Voltarian tradition : lie, lie again, lie always, and the lie will stick some way or other.

Of course, each and every Christian missionary or not, will oppose the atheistic materialist propaganda of Communists ; but Hindus too should do so. In the meantime Red propaganda goes on unabated in many newspapers, even in some owned by pious Hindus. Stranger still the Hindu Mahasabha advocates an alliance with the Soviet, and takes the lead in the Campaign against Christianity which the Reds confess is their staunchest opponent of materialism. Who among men can sort out the thoughts of men ?

In the meantime Communists go on merrily with their nefarious work ; delegations are multiplied, books arrive in shoals, public services are burrowed, slogans, and tales are dinned into the ears of the educated and semi-educated, and so on. Yet they are denounced as lackeys of foreign powers and disloyal citizens. Who among men can solve the puzzle of mankind ?

#### MADRAS LAND TAXES

Coffee, tea, rubber, cinchona, and cardamon are among the main exports of India. The Government

of Madras felt it had to do something for the planters, or about the planters. After deep thinking, it decided it would put a tax on all those products and prepared the Madras Plantation Agricultural Income-tax Bill. It even decided to levy the tax from April 1st, 1954, a retrospective measure which is alarming, which might by contagion be extended to other areas. The income-tax is levied over and above the assessment tax, and its rates run as follow : on the first Rs. 1,500 of total agricultural income, nil : on the next slab of Rs. 3,500, 9 pies per rupee ; on the next Rs. 5000, 1½ annas per rupee ; on the following Rs. 5,000, 3½ As. ; and on the remainder As. 4/- ; this is provided that no such tax will be paid on an agricultural income of less than Rs. 3,000 for single owners, or Rs. 6,000 for joint families. Besides, a super-tax is levied for revenues above Rs. 25,000, rated at As. 1½ per Rs. in the first 15,000 slab, As. two for the second, As. 3 for the next, and so on, until it reaches As. 6/- for anything above one lakh.

The tax is payable by single owners, unregistered companies etc., with the companies being charged at the maximum rate for the whole of their agricultural income. Insurance money will be calculated as part of the income. Will be exempted incomes which are totally spent on religious and charitable purposes, poor relief, education, medical assistance.

Vakils welcome the sixty-six articles of the bill ; planters are dismayed. They are resigned to a tax on agricultural income, but they complain that the rate is harshly excessive.

### A CEILING TO HOLDINGS

The Travancore-Cochin government plans to wrench a trump from the Communist cards. They decided to put a ceiling on holdings, though they exempt plantations which can hardly be cut up into bits. The maximum size per family will be as follows : 15 acres of wet land bearing two crops per year or worked as a garden ; 22½ acres of wet land yielding a single crop ; 30 acres of dry land. For families, having more than five members, 25 acres of the best land are allowed. The surplus land may be sold or settled otherwise within six months ; if not so disposed of, it will be surrendered to the Land Board who will allow the owner a compensation equal to four times the yearly gross produce.

If later on a man ever comes, by inheritance or otherwise, to possess a larger acreage than the legal maximum, he will hand it over to the Land Board at the same rate of compensation. Compensation may be given in ready cash or in six-month bonds. How the Government will secure the money is not clear. How it will deal with companies who hold mortgages on oversize holdings is still less clear. That the measure will not bring much relief to landless people is only too clear. In Travancore properties over 100 acres number one thousand, those of between 25 and 100 acres cover only nine per cent of the land.

### INDIA'S COLD WARS

War against locusts first : 70 swarms covering each 60 sq. miles devastate northern India. War against the flood waters which destroy crops and houses in Assam, Bihar, Bengal, the total being tentatively estimated at

some eight crores of rupees. The Relief Minister ascribed the floods to 'deforestation': an evil denounced periodically and hardly countered by the academic tree-planting which has become a national ceremony every July. Many plant trees in the village, and nobody waters them. This year the Bihar Government wants to mobilize the sadhus for village work; alas, every sadhu is not a Vinoba Bhave. The most delicate piece of cold war is against foreign statesmen who want to send Indian nationals back to their motherland. Ceylon is the most acute case; a first batch of 25,000 are gathered for repatriation; others are segregated on special registers; the fate of others is uncertain. Delhi has decided that Indian unskilled workers living in Ceylon will in future receive not a passport but an emigration certificate if they come back to visit people in India; as this certificate has no value in Ceylon, they will perforce remain in India once they come back. On the other hand, shopkeepers, clerks, etc., will be given regular passports and be free to travel both ways.

In Burma the friendly ministry is ready to provide Indian labourers staying there with a one-way ticket; there are one lakh such unskilled labourers. In Mauritius, the Indian community are in a majority in the population and in the Government so that they can regulate the India-ward movement. In the other lands and islands on which over four million people of Indian origin are scattered, the migration problem is not urgent at the present moment.

E. Gathier

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